

SALT II better than none: Carter

By Daniel Southerland

Staff correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

President Carter has plunged directly into the SALT debate, revealing an administration strategy for ratification that stresses several positive themes.

But among those themes lies a stern warning. Without a new agreement with the Soviet Union on limiting nuclear weapons, the United States will, in the President's view, face:

- A "crippling and perhaps fatal blow" to all arms-control efforts.
- A possible enormous further Soviet military buildup.
- A much sharper rise in US defense spending.
- A combination of heightened tensions and lowered security for both superpowers.

In sum: a relentless arms race — and a possible return to the cold war.

On the positive side, the President, in an April 25 speech in New York devoted entirely to SALT, stressed several other points: He said the emerging SALT treaty would provide significant reductions in Soviet strategic forces, flexibility to meet US defense needs, far greater certainty for US defense planning, and a foundation for further controls on nuclear and conventional arms.

"The issue is whether we will move ahead with strategic arms control or resume a relentless nuclear weapons competition," said Mr. Carter in his speech, which was delivered to the American Newspaper Publishers Association.

"That is the choice we face — between an imperfect world with a SALT agreement and an imperfect, and more dangerous, world without a SALT agreement."

Mr. Carter thus rejected the argument that seems to be implicit in the criticism of some opponents of the projected SALT treaty — that in an intensified arms race the US would come out on top because of its superior technological base.

"Each side has the will and the means to prevent the other from achieving superiority," the President said. "Neither side is in a position to exploit its nuclear weapons for political pur-

poses, nor to use strategic weapons without facing almost certain suicide."

Shortly before Mr. Carter spoke to his New York audience, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin held another in a series of negotiating sessions in Washington dealing with details of the emerging treaty.

Extra caution taken

State Department officials had revealed earlier this week that the current concern in the US Senate over the issue of verifying Soviet compliance with the projected treaty was causing negotiators from both sides to move cautiously on certain aspects of the treaty. One official said it now was a matter of making certain that "everything is nailed down."

Meanwhile, United Press International reported that its latest unofficial counts and

those of the White House and State Department showed the administration far short of the 67 votes it needs in the Senate for ratification of a new SALT treaty.

The so-called verification question appears to be the major issue at dispute at the moment for many senators engaged in the SALT debate, and President Carter, in his New York speech, devoted a significant part of his remarks to that issue.

Iran monitoring loss

Mr. Carter said the recent loss of American monitoring facilities in Iran did not mean a loss of overall monitoring capabilities. The Iranian facilities, he said, were only one of many intelligence sources the US has used to follow Soviet strategic activities.

The President also said that the Iranian monitoring related mainly to only one portion of the SALT agreement — that dealing with limits on the modernization of missiles — and to only a portion of such modernization questions.

Mr. Carter said that with its "many and effective and sophisticated intelligence collection systems," the United States is confident that no significant Soviet violation of the SALT treaty could take place without the United States detecting it.

"The stakes are too high to rely on trust — or even on the Soviets' rational inclination to act in their own best interest," said the President.

"The treaty must — and will — be verifiable from the day it is signed."